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ABSTRACT

In an effort to develop stability in a community's mental health and establish a resilient and caring society, work must begin with the family itself. This paper discusses the dimensions and types of family interactions prevalent among the Malay families in Malaysia. An integration of the humanistic, systemic, and Islamic approaches form the main theoretical framework for these interactions. A model was constructed based on two dimensions, the family-centeredness and actualization dimensions. These two dimensions produced three family types: self-centered, self-family-centered, and family-centered. The self-centered family type is characterized by selfish family members; the family-centered family type is characterized by martyrs. These two types of family interactions would hypothetically place family members at risk. Too much thinking about one's self or one's family would jeopardize mental health within the family and later manifest to the society. It is proposed that these two aspects be in equilibrium. Balance is needed between caring for one's family and caring for one's self. In this way mental health can be maintained and the factors are in place to create a caring society. (Contains 3 figures, 4 tables, and 63 references.) (Author/JDM)

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A HUMANISTIC APPROACH TOWARDS FAMILY INTERACTION – AN IMPLICATION TO MENTAL HEALTH AND CARING SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

In the efforts to develop stability in community's mental heatlh and to establish a resilient and caring society, it is very much felt that work has to be establised at the very root level, i.e. the family system itself. This paper proposes to discuss the dimensions and types of family interaction that are prevalent among the Malay families in Malaysia. An integration of the humanistic [ideas proposed by Allport (1937), Rogers (1951), and Maslow (1970)], systemic [von Bertalanffy (1968)], and Islamic approaches formed the main theorethical framework. Indeed, it has been much proven that significant relationships do exist between self-concept, family concept, and family interaction measures (Lily Mastura Hj. Harun, 1995). A model i.e., MAFIM was constructed based on two dimensions – the family-centeredness and actualization dimensions. These two dimensions produced three family types – self-centered, self-family-centered, and family-centered. Self-centered family type is characterized by 'selfish' family members, family-centered family type is characterized by 'martyrs' - family importance above anything else. These two types of family interactions would hypothetically place individuals at risk. Too much thinking about one's self or one's family would jeopardize mental health within the family and later manifest risk to the society. It is proposed that these two aspects be in equilibrium - one should think for one's self and one's family thus a balance is strike and mental health would be maintained and thus gives effect to the development of a caring society.

Key words: family, family interaction, and humanistic.

Introduction

The family is the corner-stone of society. A form of family structure is requisite to the persistence of societies themselves. Without the provisions for the maintenance of cognitive and affective interactions between adults and infants such as that found in families, stable adults cannot be produced on a large enough scale to ensure the on-going operation of a society (Edwards, 1969). It has been said that the family institution is thought to have faced social calamities and suffered serious setbacks in its roles and functions. This further weakens the efforts of integrating mankind.

Family as a concept

What is the family? To answer this question, one can look at 'family' as an ideology or an actuality and/or reality. As an ideology, the family seems to be modeled much on perfection and finesse as in the lives of aristocrats. But as an actuality and/or reality, a family is what it is, it can either be functional or dysfunctional.

Family, as defined by Burr et al., (1979), is a basic unit of society. It is a unit whose members are economically and emotionally dependent on one another and are responsible for each other's development, stability and protection. The nuclear family includes two adults, one of each gender, who maintains a socially approved sexual relationship, with one or more children of their own or with adopted children. The family serves as the basic unit of socialization, to teach cultural values and adaptation to society.

Family as defined from the Islamic point of view refers to a specific structure bound by marital and natural blood ties relationship. This relationship entails mutual expectations in rights and responsibilities appropriate with the teachings of Islam. This is reinforced by the Divine Rules of *Allah* and an intense spiritual belief (Hammudah 'Abd Al 'Ati, 1985).

One distinctive feature of Islam is that the rights and responsibilities of one family is not a private affair but extends towards religious brotherhood. Islam lays emphasis on specific acts of kindness and defines the responsibilities and rights of various relationships. In a widening circle of relationship, our first obligation is to our immediate family - parents, husband or wife and children, then to other

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relatives, neighbours, friends and acquaintances, orphans and widows, the needy of the community, our fellow Muslims, all our fellow human beings and animals.

Respect and care for parents is very much stressed in Islamic teaching and is a very important part of a Muslim's expression of faith. This is revealed in *Sura Al Israil* (The Children of Israel, 17:23-24), in the *ayat* below:

> "Your Sustainer has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life-time, do not say to them a word of contempt nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour. And out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility and say: My sustainer! Bestow on them Your mercy, even as they cherished me in childhood",

And for the relatives, it is revealed:

> "And render to the relatives their due rights, as (also) to those in need, and to the traveller; and do not squander your wealth in the manner of a spendthrift", (17:26, Qur'an).

For the neighbours, the Prophet (PBUH) has narrated in a ***hadeeth*** (cited in Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, 1989):

> "He is not a believer who eats his fill when his neighbour beside him is hungry; and: He does not believe whose neighbours are not safe from his injurious conduct".

Hence, family from the Islamic point of view encompasses a wide circle of individuals which make the most through mutual expectation of rights and responsibilities and religious brotherhood. The family is the foundation of Islamic society. The peace and security offered by a stable family unit is greatly valued, and seen as essential for the spiritual growth of its members. A harmonious social order is created by the existence of extended families; children are treasured, and rarely leave home until the time they marry.

Hence the family in this context will be defined as a set of individuals within the same household bound by marital and natural blood ties, entailed with mutual expectations in rights and responsibilities valued by the teachings of Islam.

Functions of the family

As for functions of the family, Shaffer (1988) suggested that the family serves society in many ways amongst which are: economically, approved sexual outlets, and through the caregiving, nurturing and training that parents and other family members provide for young children.

According to Coleman and Cressey (1980), the family's most important function is to replace those who had died or are disabled. This replacement has three different aspects. First, the family provides for reproduction through a permissible sexual relationship; second, it socializes the young and; third, it provides support and protection for children and adults. The family is an intimate group, which remains together for a period extending at least from the time the child is born until the time that child reaches maturity. The family must also be an economic unit which produces and shares wealth among its members.

Farmer (1979) emphasized that the family performs important functions for the society and for the individual in the society. It provides population replacement and acts as an agent of socialization, social control and social cohesion. It is not an end in itself but it serves to solve problems involved in meeting certain universal human needs, both societal and individual.

Family as a social system

The epistemology of understanding the family as a social system can be viewed from numerous perspectives. Three important perspectives in this area are the interactionist, situationalist, and social-psychological models.

The interactionists (Schvaneveldt, 1970; L'Abate et al., 1986), looked at the family as a system for mediating the personal relationships between husband and wife and parents and children. It aims to interpret family phenomena in terms of processes such as role-playing, status relations, communication problems, decision making, stress reactions, and socialization processes. This model viewed the social conduct of an individual as a function of his social milieu (Stryker, 1959; Hill & Hansen, 1960). This model is useful in understanding the relationships between family and society.

The situationalists (Rallings, 1970) viewed the family as a set of interacting persons within a particular type of social situation. A social situation is made up of stimuli which are external to the organism, having special relatedness to each other, and operate as a unit. It has been long emphasized that environment has a significant role as a causative factor in human behaviour. According to Bossard and Boll (1943) the most important human behaviour

occurs in family situations. These situations offer the best opportunities for understanding and eventually directing human behaviour on a societal scale.

From the social-psychological (Brown, 1970) point of view, the self concept (Rogers, 1951, 1959, 1961), personality interaction (Adler, 1930; Murray, 1938; Fromm, 1941; Horney, 1945; Sullivan, 1953), and need theory (Terman, 1938; Winch, 1952, 1958; Winch & Ktsanes, 1954; Murstein, 1961; Sampson, 1962) are the elements that constitute the family as a social system. The self concept approach is mainly concerned with the individual and the way he or she views himself or herself. It is a fact that individuals relate to other according to their level of self-acceptance. Relationships enhance personality development, especially in the family environment. Hence the family is seen as one of the crucial institutions that have a direct effect on personality formation (on the self) of the individual. In relation to this, need theory seems to complement the make-up of the self concept and interpersonal interactions between individuals and their family members. These needs are met in direct as well as indirect fashions. And although interaction is important in many of these needs, in some instances self-perception is to be viewed as the dominant factor in fulfiling needs.

These three perspectives have many commonalities but one commonality is that the internal processes within the family environment, i.e., interaction. Interaction plays a dominant and major role in personality development. Schvaneveldt (1970) defined interaction as a process taking place between individuals. Brown (1970) defined interaction as a reciprocal action between two or more individuals. Interactions occurs within a system (von Bertalanffy, 1968). In this process, self concepts are crystallized through interaction with others, especially as the person comes to perceive the manner in which he or she is regarded by others. Framo (1965) defined family interaction as the system-based, psychodynamic ways by which members of a family communicate and relate to each other and play their roles vis-a-vis one another.

State of the family

Thus through interaction, the family itself can be seen as a cause to the success and/or deterioration of a family and society. Hence the family can be seen as a variable, free to manipulate its members to the 'survival of the fittest' in the society at large. It can be said that family is a determinant factor for the survival of the society and civilization (Zimmerman, 1947).

It can be argued that the shift of the traditional functions of the family to the state has reduced the power and prestige of the family. It can also be argued that, traditionally, families were bound together through the various functions described by Ogburn (1938). But today, with the exception of the affectional function, the relevance of many of these functions has been greatly reduced in the family setting. The family is said to be in a state of dilemma (Ogburn, 1938; Winch & Goodman, 1968; Leslie, 1979). And as Edwards (1969) puts it, both in terms of structure and function, the family under the impetus of social change is comparatively small, has fewer functions and is relatively isolated. It is, in short, a stripped-down model. The rapid social change has introduced new anxieties and economic insecurities, new frustrations and hopeless wishes have grown faster than their means of satisfaction (Edwards, 1969).

Evolution of the family

Zimmerman (1947) argued that social changes have proceded according to a deterministic pattern, with the family and the level of civilization in mutual cause-and-effect relationship. It started off with the trustee family (a family state), characterized by power vested totally in the family over its members, immortality, and non-state interventions. This family type is characterized by a high degree of familism. The next historical phase sees the emergence of the domestic family type. The state grows and gains more control, while control and power within the family lessen and weaken, hence striking a balance between the power of the family and the state. The 'family state' has ceased and a balance between individualism and familism is achieved. This led to the evolution of the atomistic family type. Zimmerman described this family type as being characterized by extreme individualism, moral degeneration and relentless hedonism. The power and authority of the family are reduced to the minimum and the state is but a collection or organization of individuals. Marriage is but a civil contract; divorce is rampant; there is a blurred distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children as full rights are granted to all in the atomistic society. Other aspects of rampant individualism are traceable in the the feminist movement, childlessness, youth problem, delinquency, drug and substance abuse and the like. The atomistic family is

characterized by a loss of the capacity to carry out the necessary family functions and unabashed hedonism.

According to Zimmerman, evolution from the domestic family to the atomistic family can both be taken as a cause and effect of the 'decay' of the civilization. This transition gives new meanings to marital and family institutions. Marriage ceremonies become less meaningful and widespread adultery, sexual perversions, divorces, childlessness, delinquency and so on have become the hallmark of the century. The sense of loyalty and sacrifice to one's family and religion is seen to be diminishing.

The family in this century has been described in these terms (Sorokin, 1941, p. 776):

> "a sacred union of husband and wife, of parents and children, will continue to disintegrate. Divorce and separation will increase until any profound difference between socially sanctioned marriages and illicit sex relationship disappears. Children will be separated earlier and earlier from their parents. The main socio-cultural functions of the family will further decrease until the family becomes a mere cohabitation of male and female while the house will become a mere overnight parking place, mainly for sex-relationship".

Family Problems and Social Problems: Bemoan the Decay

Leach (1967, p. 695) commented that the isolation and intimacy of family life incubates hate which finds expression as conflict in the wider community. The society is described as a loose assemblage of isolated groups of parents and children. Leach concluded that:

> "In the past kinsfolk and neighbours gave the individual continuous moral support throughout his life. Today the domestic household is isolated. The family looks inward upon itself; there is an intensification of emotional stress between husband and wife, and parents and children. The strain is greater than most of us can bear. Far from being the basis of a good society, the family with its narrow privacy and tawdry secrets, is the source of all our discontents".

Leach (1967, p. 695) went on to say that:

> "Our present society is emotionally very uncomfortable. The parents and children, huddled together in their loneliness, take too much out of each other. The parents fight; the children rebel".

It can be argued that the continued existence and influence of the family as a social system accounts for the functions it performs on behalf of society. This contributes to the maintenance of society. From this standpoint, behavioural family patterns are related to the norms of society. There is a mutual interacting and supportive relationship. In this respect between the family and society, it can be observed that in periods when societal norms are being disrupted or are changing rapidly, the family, as an important element in the total social structure, also changes.

As the functionalists see it, family problems stem from disorganization caused by rapid social change. It has been suggested by some that the extended family type is compatible with traditional culture but ill suited for modern industrial world. Industrialization broke up the extended family units into conjugal or nuclear family type which made it impossible for the performance of family functions to be efficient. The functionalists view the present family systems as facing troubles and problems because the family system has not had enough time to adapt to social and economic changes (Coleman & Cressey, 1980). This situation has been termed by Ogburn as cultural lag (Ogburn & Nimkoff, 1955; Leslie, 1979; Winch & Goodman, 1968; Winch, McGinnis, & Barringer, 1965; Folsom, 1934). Toffler (1970) phrased a term, future shock to describe a psychological state resulting from the increasing speed of change in western post-industrial society. In this regard, social problems could prevail. Merton (1976) defined social problems from a sociological point of view. He believed that a social problem exists when there is a sizeable difference between the ideals of a society and its actual achievements. Social problems are created by the failure to close the gap between the way people believe things should be and the way things really are.

Fuller and Myers (1941) concluded that social problems follow a sequence which they call the 'natural history of a social problem'. They desribed three stages - awareness, policy determination, and social reform - but they also argue that the whole idea of a social problem depends on social values. The problematic behaviour is usually defined by the way in which it contrasts with what is considered to be socially acceptable.

Humanistic leverage

The humanistic approach is much influenced by existential and phenomenological theories. It looks at the present rather than on the past and it is concerned with the immediate experience of family members, in the here-and-now. The common feature in all humanistic approaches is the emphasis on experiential processes (McLeod, 1993). Accordingly, this model is unique as it emphasizes on experience and affect. Emotional experience is emphasized over awareness, which in turn is emphasized over behaviour. They are concerned with enhancing the quality of life of individuals in the family hence creating a heightened affective experience for family members. This will initiate the restorative and self-actualizing processes.

The basic theoretical premises that underlie the humanistic approach are: a basic commitment to individual awareness, expression, self-fulfillment which is dependent upon family cohesiveness (Whitaker, 1981), importance of good communication (Satir, 1972), and flexibility and freedom of family roles and distribution of power. The humanistic approach is idiographic in its view - each individual is considered unique and the basic commitment of this approach is to individual growth – collectively family growth.

The humanistic faith in the natural goodness and wisdom of unacculturated feelings and drives, has made this approach compatible with the Islamic approach - this point will be discussed later. A person has the innate tendency to self-actualize (Rogers, 1951; Maslow, 1970), engage in self-enhancement (Allport, 1937), and take personal responsibility (Kempler, 1981) to maximize his or her potentials. Normal family interaction is described as supporting and nurturing individual growth and experience towards self-actualization drawing on flexible, creative, and constructive problem-solving skills (Satir, 1972; Nichols, 1984). The family is still an integrated whole and not a confederate of separate individuals. They are secure enough to be passionate, offers its members the freedom to be themselves and supports privacy as well as togetherness.

Accordingly, denial of impulses and suppression of feelings (Nichols, 1984), being rigidly locked into self-protection and avoidance (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1978), seeking security and not satisfaction (Sullivan, 1953), smothering emotion and desire, and mystifying experience (Laing, 1967) are seen as the root causes of family problems.

From the discussion above, it can be discerned that the humanistic approach is most appropriate. To reiterate, the humanistic approach is specifically concerned with enhancing the quality of life of the individual and the family. It involves providing an intensified experience for family members so that their own restorative and self-actualizing processes will take place. The natural fit of the humanistic approach in family studies is fundamental because it addresses the process of enhancing close interpersonal relationships (Rogers, 1961). It also believes in the goodness of the person which is an important element in Islam. Accordingly, the person is naturally growth oriented and will progress toward fulfilment if conditions are favourable. He or she is optimistic and feels that the freedom to develop these characteristics results in positive and beneficial behaviours. Theoretically, the person is viewed as a 'growth-motivated', hence internally optimistic in character.

The humanistic approach though less mystically inclined, has a more positive attitude towards religious views of human psyche. It lays great emphasis on the self as a unifying factor which accounts for the individual's subjective experience, and which determines much observable behaviour. The humanists affirm a religio-metaphysical dualistic conception of human psyche: a person's body versus his or her soul or mind. A person is not seen as a passive automaton, but as an active participant who has the freedom of choice to shape his destiny and that of his or her fellow being (Absar Ahmad, 1992).

Common focus

There are many parallels between Islamic principles and the humanistic approach. The points of commonality that will be discussed further are the concept of self (human nature), the actualizing process, and its relationship to the family environment. These will be synthesized to formulate the research theoretical framework.

Islamic concept of self

The Islamic concept of self is not purely a psychological one, rather it has a great deal to do with the philosophical-metapyhsical aspect of the essential substantial nature of a person (Absar Ahmad, 1992). The nature or concept of self in Islam is guided by the Qur'an, which concerns itself to bring a person to right beliefs and righteous conduct. The Qur'an describes the inner nature of a person - the social, moral, and spiritual aspects. The concept of self in Islam is explained by the Qur'anic words like *ruh*, *nafs*,

and *qalb*. It is important - even if it might appear self-evident - that the concepts should be understood in the context of the Qur'an itself rather than its equivalents of the terms used in modern psychology (Zafar Afaq Ansari, 1992). *Ruh* is the first and foremost concept regarding the inner nature of self or a person. It is the breathing of God's spirit into a person, i.e., the faculty of God-like knowledge and will, which, if rightly used, would give a person superiority over other creatures (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 1975). *Qalb* or 'heart', the second component of self is presumably the operating agency of psyche which transforms the spiritual potentiality or *ruh* into actuality. *Nafs* is another word from the Qur'an to indicate an important aspect of self or human. It refers to the principle of life and consciousness, and the lowest level of self. There are three levels of *nafs*; *al-nafs al-ammarah bi al-su'* (the *nafs* impelling towards evil), *al-nafs al-lawwamah* (the changing or blaming *nafs*), and *al-nafs al-mutma'innah* (the *nafs* at peace) (Karim, 1982, 1984; Manzurul Haq, 1992; Naumana Amjad, 1992; Absar Ahmad, 1992; Zafar Afaq Ansari, 1992; Abdul Hayy Alawi, 1992). The concept of self in Islam can be briefly summarized as comprising of three components which are closely interrelated. To reiterate, *ruh* is the divine element in a person which places the person in the exalted position of being entrusted with the responsibility of Allah's vicegerency, has a potential for knowledge and God-consciousness. This potential is operated by the *qalb* which is the locus of cognition, thought and feeling, and therefore responsible for decision- making regarding actions, and their correspondence with belief. However *qalb* can function in two opposite directions giving effects to the *nafs*. On the one hand, it can reinforce the positive tendencies of the personality leading to a state of constant awareness and understanding (*al-nafs al-lawwamah*), and on the other hand, it can reduce the perceptual and cognitive functions of a person (*al-nafs al-ammarah bi al-su'*).

The actualizing or becoming process in Islam is termed as *tazkiyah* (Muhammad Fazl-ur-Rahman Ansari, 1973, Karim, 1984). It is a strong motivated and continuous psychological effort to eradicate all the possible tendencies within the self that hampers moral human development. According to Mah Nazir Riaz (1992), the intense love for God and fear for His displeasure, and the intense love for the holy Prophet (PBUH) and absolute loyalty to him, make it possible for a Muslim to undertake the process of *tazkiyah*. It is at this point, i.e., the elevation of *al-nafs al-mutma'innah* to *ruh*, that the pacified self or actualized person is found. In other words, the person has attained his or her positive self concept. On the other hand, negative self concept is the product of unsuccessful *tazkiyah*. The process of *tazkiyah* is much assisted by the process of socialization and interaction inherent in the person's immediate environment. The interrelationship of the three components of self and the process of *tazkiyah* is illustrated in Figure 1. Being characterized as an ethico-religious and theocentric society, and based on the norm of *tawhid* or integration, the extension of one's self concept can be reflected upon the immediate environment - the family and community. Based on the love for God, love for humanity, there is pursuit for piety, truth, justice, love, wisdom, and selfless service to fellow-beings.

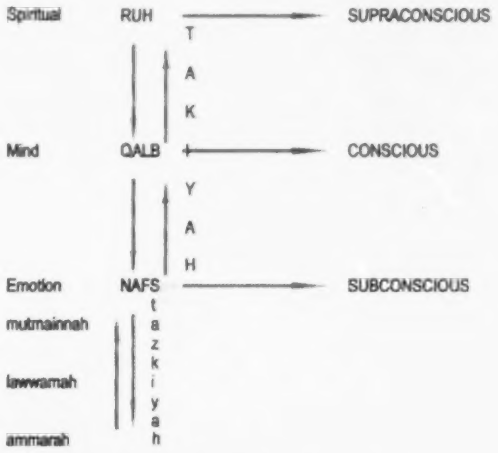

Figure 1: Self And The Process Of Tazkiyah
Source: Karim (1984).

Therefore, if a person is successful in the *tazkiyah* process - the same attribute is found in his or her relationship towards the family - the self concept reciprocates the family concept. If a person feels good about himself or herself, he or she likewise will feel good towards the family.

These two concepts - the self and family, are said to be closely related to one's family interaction. In fact, the three elements are said to be circularly and systematically related. The human infant is born innocent and created in the best of moulds (Qur'an, 95:4). The socialization and interaction processes then shape the child. The Muslims accept the notion that childhood

training shapes adult personality. In this respect, the family seems to play the most crucial role. The parents whose orders are complied with, and who serve as models to be identified with, can explicitly and implicitly help their children to internalize the guiding principles of the Qur'an for self discipline and for interaction with other people. Thus the Islamic perspectives of self, actualizing process and its relationship to the family environment clearly indicates the systemic impact of each element onto the other.

Humanists' concept of self

The concept of self has been discussed extensively by the humanists. Three humanists whose views will be highlighted are those of Allport (1937, 1950, 1955, 1960, 1961), Maslow (1962, 1970, 1971), and Rogers (1951, 1959, 1961). They are chosen because of their positive attitude towards religious views of human psyche (Absar Ahmad, 1992). Unlike the structure of self that has been provided by the Islamic approach, the humanistic approach lacks an explicit conceptualization of religious experience.

According to Allport (1937), the outstanding characteristic of a person is his or her individuality; the unique creation of the forces of nature. A person reflects the integral organization of life processes into the amazingly stable and self contained system of the individual creature. Allport (1960) advocated the open system in viewing a person; which gives an equal emphasis on past and present motives, as well as regarding that organisms are future oriented. The open system views a person as reactive and proactive.

Allport (1960) suggested that persons strive toward self-enhancement and increased growth, rather than being motivated from a sense deficiency, toward a state of increased appreciation of self. Above all, self is seen as the ultimate reconciler of opposites and within this schema even religious sentiment has its place. According to Allport (1950, p.142),

> "a man's religion is the audacious bid he makes to bind himself to creation and to the Creator. It is his ultimate attempt to enlarge and to complete his own personality by finding the supreme context in which he rightly belongs".

Maslow (1970, 1971) described a healthy person as one that possesses sufficient personal fortitude and creativity to be innocent. Innocence refers to the healthy personality's capacity to live without pretense, to be genuinely bereft of guilt in thoughts, in words, and in actions. Maslow (1970) termed the self-actualizing person as making full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, etc. Such people seem to be fulfilling themselves and to be doing the best that they are capable of doing.

For a person to reach the point of self-actualization, it is necessary for him or her to content to the hierachy of potency needs as proposed by Maslow (1970) via the process of interaction. The basic hierachy of needs (Maslow, 1970) are schematized as in Figure 2.

When all the four levels of hierachy, the basic needs, are satisfied, the highest needs for self-actualization emerge. Collateral with self-actualization needs are the unique human desires to know, to understand the world, and to enjoy its beauty. Once the self-actualization need is met, the person enters a course of growth motivation - metamotivated. This person develops meta-needs, that is Being-needs or B-values. To be fully self-actualizing, one must be committed to long-lasting goals: the B-values. B-values are listed as the needs for: truth, goodness, beauty, unity-wholeness, dichotomy-transcendence, aliveness-process, uniqueness, perfection, necessity, completion-finality, justice, order, simplicity, richness-totality, effortlessness, playfulness, self-sufficiency, and meaningfulness. With this Maslow (1971, p. 30) revised his definition of the self-actualizing person as:

> "it may turn out to be useful to add to the definition of the self-actualizing person, not only (a) that he be sufficiently free of illness, (b) that he be sufficiently gratified in his basic needs, and (c) that he be positively using his capacities, but also (d) that he be motivated by some values which he strive for or gropes for and to which he is loyal".

Being fully-actualized with the B-values, a person may encounter peak experiences. Individuals who hold particularly materialistic mechanistic views of life are people who try to ward off and forget peak experiences. These 'nonpeakers' deliberately cut themselves off from an important spiritual part of life. 'Peakers' are associated with the ability to resacralize people and things. The self-actualizing person has learned to be awe-inspired by others, to marvel at and enjoy the good things of life, to accept the spiritual as well as the material.

Rogers (1961) viewed a person as essentially positive, basically inclied towards self-

actualization, maturity and socialization. The self is viewed as comprising of a phenomenal field made of the 'self', 'me' or 'I'. The self concept represents an organized and consistent pattern of perceptions. Two points are noteworthy of the concept of self. First, the self is not a little person inside of us. The self does not do anything. The individual does not have a self that controls behaviour, rather the self represents an organized set of perceptions. Second, the pattern of experiences and perceptions known as the self is in general, available to awareness. In other words, it can be made conscious, thus self concept is primarily conscious.

Objectives of the study:

1. To identify the dimensions and types of Malay family interaction in Malaysia,
2. To describe the interaction processes that are characteristic of each family type, and

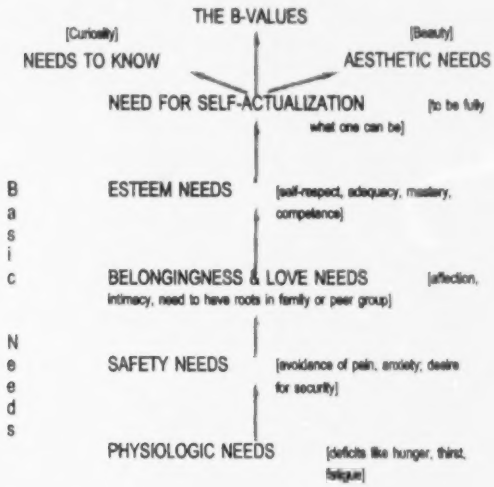

Figure 2: Maslow's Need Hierarchy
Source: Maslow (1970)

3. To construct a model of Malay family interaction.
4. To identify relationships between individual family members' views of themselves (self concept), views toward the family (family concept), and family interaction in the Malay family and

Instruments

In achieving the objectives above, three research tools were administered. Self-concept (SCS) was measured by the adapted version of the Tennessee self-concept scale (Chiam, 1985), family concept (FCS) and family interaction scales (FIS) were developed by the researcher. FCS measures the real and ideal family concepts while FIS measures general functioning, awareness, communication, and system-maintenance – elements of interaction in the family.

Table 1: SCS (PV1-FIHAQ): Psychometric Properties

Cronbach/Standardized alpha	.84/.85
Spearman-Brown coefficient	.76
Part 1	.84
Part 2	.61
Number of items	50
Max/min raw score	200/50

Table 2: FCS (PV2-FIHAQ): Psychometric Properties

	Part A (RFCS)	Part B (IFCS)
Cronbach alpha	.97	.97
Standardized item alpha	.97	.98
Spearman-Brown coefficient	.90	.91
Part 1	.94	.93
Part 2	.95	.96
Number of items	34	34
Max/min raw score	136/34	136/34

Table 3: FIS (PV2-FIHAQ): Psychometric Properties

Cronbach/Standardized alpha	.98
Spearman-Brown coefficient	.96
Part 1	.96
Part 2	.95
Number of items	82
Number of factors	4
Max/min raw score	328/82

Respondents

Respondents of the study comprised of 639 Malay individuals or a three family-member respondent from intact families, i.e. father, mother, and child. They were sampled randomly within the township vicinity of historical Malacca and each family was visited by a research assisstant to admininster the questionaires.

Discussion

MAFIM – Malay Family Interaction Model

Significant relationships between self-concept, family concept, and family interaction were established (Table 4).

MAFIM is based on two dimensions namely, the 'actualization' dimension and the 'family-centeredness' dimension. The actualization

dimension reflects the humanistic as well as the Islamic approaches' views that humans have

Table 4: Correlation Coefficients Of SCS, FCS And FIS

	SCS	FCS	FIS
SCS	-	.6253**	.6562**
FCS	.6253**	-	.6722**
FIS	.6562**	.6722**	-

N = 639 ** 2-tailed significant: $p < .001$

inherent tendencies to actualize. The actualization dimension is measured by the FIS which is divided into three levels: low, average, and high levels of functioning. The family-centeredness dimension is measured by the SCS minus the FCS. Both scores are divided into three levels as with the FIS. This produces three levels of orientation, i.e., SCS > FCS (self-centered); SCS = FCS (self-and-family centered); and SCS < FCS (family-centered). As discussed earlier, the humanistic theorists emphasized freedom and the necessity to discover the essence of one's individuality in the immediacy of experience and environment provided for by the family and from humanistic and Islamic perspectives individual growth can be linked to family growth. These two elements exist in a reciprocal relationship, working together to form fully functioning families. Thus the optimal family type will exhibit balanced level of self concept to family concept (SCS = FCS). Individuals should feel good about themselves as well as towards the family. The interests of the individual and of the family are both given equal focus. This equal focus is reflective to the integrated, comprehensive, harmonious and balanced development of the individual, family and society as emphasized in Islam. This family type can be categorized as functional thus known as the self-family-centered interaction as shown in the middle portion of the model.

In comparison to the above, there were individuals who have high self concepts but low family concepts (SCS > FCS). In other words, these individuals feel good about themselves but not towards the family. They might potray 'disengaged' and 'distant' form of relationships. Thus it can be assumed that it would be difficult for this type of family to be fully functioning since the individuals do not have any regard for the family except themselves. It can also be assumed that these individuals might have pseudo high self-concepts and superficial interactions. It would be almost impossible for a person to positively actualize in the real sense of the word, without having any regard for the family. As emphasized earlier, Islam nourishes human unselfishness, generosity and love in a well organized family system. In fact, it is a godly duty of every person to maintain normal relations with other beings especially those related to him or her in blood or neighbourhood. As such this family type will produce self-centered individuals with self-centered interactions, which in actual fact is against the Islamic principles of an integrated society. In light of the discussion above, this family type can be considered as not fully functioning or less optimal in nature. This is shown in the upper portion of the model. On contrary to the above, there were individuals who have high regard for the family but not toward themselves (SCS < FCS). They resemble some sense of 'enmeshment', 'togetherness' and diffusion of

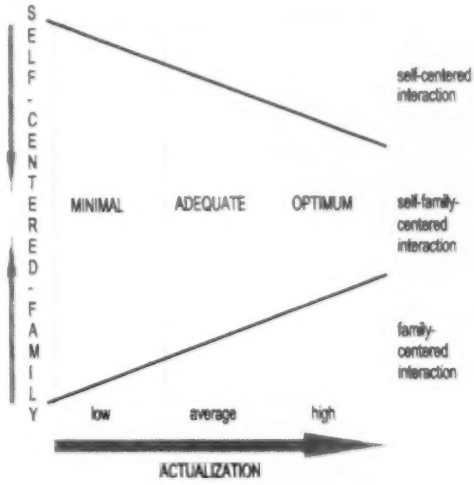

Figure 3: Malay Family Interaction Model (MAFIM)
Source: Lily Mastura Hj. Harun (1995)

personal boundaries. For these people, the family's interests come first before self or individuals' interests. But then again according to the Islamic guidance, a person has been reminded of his or her purpose in life, his or her duties and obligations towards himself or herself, his or her kith and kin, community and his or her Creator. At the individual level, the Islamic way of life provides guidance on temporal, spiritual, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic dimensions of his personality. Thus integration of individual

personality leads to integration of human society and finally integration of different groups of mankind. In essence, a healthy person is one who fulfils his or her personal as well as his or her social obligations. In the same manner as to the second family type, it can also be assumed that this family might not be fully functioning and less optimal. As individuals' interests were forsaken, family members hardly actualize. Family functioning is but a mere facade of family solidarity and less reflective of the total system.

Implication towards mental health and caring society

> "... establishing a fully caring society and a caring culture, a social system in which society will come before self, in which the welfare of the people will revolve not around the state or the individual but around a strong and resilient family system; ... a fully moral and ethical society, whose citizens are strong in religious and spiritual values and imbued with the highest ethical standards; ... creating a psychologically, liberated, secure and developed Malaysian society with faith and confidence in itself, fully aware of all its potential; ... to profess our customs, cultures, and religious beliefs ...".

The quotation above is an excerpt of the nine strategic challenges formulated to form a developed Malaysia. Malaysia should not only be developed economically but it must be a nation that is fully developed along all other dimensions: politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically, and culturally. These are the moulds of a developed Malaysia. Malaysia must be fully developed in terms of national unity and social cohesion, economy, justice, political stability, system of government, quality of life, social and spiritual values, national pride and confidence.

By the year 2020, Malaysia can be a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and religious values, living in a country that is democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient. There can be no fully developed Malaysia until the nine strategic challenges that have confronted us from the moment of our birth as an independent nation been overcome. These challenges raise a number of issues which must be confronted by Malaysia to become a developed nation. The issues are:

1. The establishment of one Malaysian nation state.
2. An industrialized country.
3. Social and economic justice.
4. Moral and ethics.
5. The development of society based on family systems and values.

Of all the above, the fifth issue is of most interest here, as it relates to the subject-matter of this study. This issue enhances the social system, i.e., family development. As mentioned earlier family is the corner-stone of society, the foundation of the development of society. Society on the other hand is the basis of national development. Hence, it implies that the strength and calibre of a nation lies in the hands of family and society. This emphasis carrys much truth as family and society personalizes an individual. These individuals are leaders and citizens of the country. A nation's culture that is embedded with value system and life-style (inclusive of a caring society and a caring culture) as ambitioned by the VISION has to be initiated at an early stage. For this to be successful, the nation needs to realize the significance of the family system in a nation's development and steps should be undertaken to establish a functional family and society. The VISION 2020 seems like an ecomonic mission as it is strongly inclined towards the economic sphere. But taken analytically, it is more than that. It represents a subtle and yet strong agenda for developing the society. Concepts such as 'social', 'cultural', 'moral', 'ethical', 'psychological', 'quality of life', and 'familial issues' are evident in the passage above, which amounts to a caring society, a caring culture and a strong and resilient family system. This is all possible when family interactions are given due consideration, i.e. self-family-centered interaction - family members attain profound mental health thus caring society emerges.

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